

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
21 July 2020 (7.30 - 10.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Philippa Crowder, Judith Holt, Robby Misir, Dilip Patel, Nisha Patel, Christine Smith, Maggie Themistocli and Michael White (Vice-Chair)
Residents' Group	Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone
Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group'	Linda Hawthorn and Christopher Wilkins
Independent Residents' Group	Natasha Summers and Graham Williamson
Labour Group	Keith Darvill
North Havering Residents' Group	Darren Wise (Chairman)

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

The Chairman reminded Members of the protocol for meetings being held during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

2 COVID-19 OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members received a presentation on the Covid-19 Outbreak Management Plan.

The presentation outlined the number of current cases of Covid-19 in the borough. At present the number of positive tests in the borough ranged between 7 and 14. The current rate was approximately 5 positive tests per 100,000 residents. These figures were from people testing positive in the borough and not from BHRT hospital admission numbers.

Officers advised that the Coronavirus had not disappeared and there were still low levels of transmission as the lockdown was easing.

Lockdown had controlled the first wave of the disease but had itself caused economic and health harm.

Relaxation of social distancing was underway and there was no sign, so far, that new cases were increasing but the risk of further waves remained, which in turn would cause more deaths and significant ongoing health problems.

NHS test and trace had also been launched as additional control measure

The aim of the outbreak control plan was to minimise further harm to local residents and prevent local outbreaks by maintaining public support and compliance with social distancing and the NHS Test & Trace system. This would ensure the borough was Covid secure and that an effective response to bring local outbreaks under control could be mobilised when required.

The current communications encouraged residents to “Keep Havering Safe” by carrying out hand washing and maintaining social distancing.

The Council was assisting with ensuring settings across the borough were compliant with relevant guidance, prioritising higher risk settings and providing support to encourage compliance with enforcement where this was necessary.

The report also highlighted the outbreak management plan process and the governance arrangements for the outbreak plan.

In relation to care homes residents were highly vulnerable as had been evidenced across the country and worldwide. The next step would be to focus on the use of mass testing to minimise risk posed by asymptomatic carriage and to do more to prevent entry of Covid into the homes. The very elderly also sometimes developed different symptoms aside from the usual high temperature, continuous cough and changes in taste and smell. There were also plans in place to minimise the amount of different homes that agency staff visited to keep the virus controlled.

With regards to schools the priority was to minimise harm to children in schools as closures harmed children and the economy. DfE guidance regarding social distancing and the physical redesign of classrooms to accommodate children of essential workers by the use of extended bubbles had enabled the return of Years Reception, 1 and 6. Schools were also considering staggering start and finish times for children. Transport to and from schools could prove to be a problem for many families and there was also likely to be an increase in private vehicle use as the use of public transport was currently discouraged.

In response to a question relating to businesses keeping open books of visitors which could lead to GDPR breaches and could encourage people to leave false details officers advised that there was guidance relating to this and that it was important to keep people's confidence in the system. Once the 14day infectious period had ended then the data should be destroyed.

To the present date there had been no businesses in the borough that had reported a number of employees that had tested positive. There had been businesses across London that had reported cluster cases but there were none in Havering at present.

There had been 2000 tests carried out in the last week in Havering which had generated 10 positive cases. Havering's rate of testing was comparable with other London boroughs. To date there had been no evidence of any clustering in any areas of the borough.

With regards to communications and getting the message across to hard to reach groups example of communication forms included social media, newsletters, webinars with faith based groups, texts, phone calls and email.

The Board **noted** the presentation.

3 **SMART WORKING AT HOME**

The presentation detailed what measures the Council had taken pre Covid-19 to help introduce smarter working including the roll out of IT equipment and the rationalisation of office space which enabled staff to work from home.

The presentation also highlighted which Council services had received Windows 10 enabled devices.

Officers were currently using Zoom for meetings but it was planned to migrate over to Microsoft Teams in the future.

Members were advised that staff completed e-learning followed by a checklist e-form and condensed DSE assessment (special requirements), which were then processed by the Health and Safety team before items were collected

The Council had introduced an Innovative drive through collection process which was now considered gold standard and being adopted across London. To date Over 700 requests for office equipment had been received.

The presentation also highlighted the S4 project which had started with the discovery phase. The project would consider how the Council could streamline and reduce the use of paper. As the majority of staff were working from home, the enforced break from using printers regularly was also an opportunity for the S4 project to rationalise printers.

In response to a question officers confirmed that they would ensure staff were reminded about GDPR and customer confidentiality.

Officers also confirmed that plans were in place to allow some members of staff to work in the workplace if they were unable to work from home.

The Board **noted** the presentation.

4 **REMODELLING OF ONESOURCE SERVICES: NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FINANCE FUNCTION FOR HAVERING**

The report before Members gave an update on the future of the Finance service provision to LB Havering following the decision taken at the 26 June 2020 oneSource Joint Committee meeting to vary the current Agreement.

The oneSource Joint Committee had agreed to the request of LB Newham and LB Bexley to make the following changes to the shared arrangement:-

- Bexley to withdraw all services from oneSource.
- Newham to withdraw from all Finance Services except for the Finance services provided currently by the Transactional Team, Treasury and Pensions and the Oracle Systems Support Team (the latter initially for one year only).

These changes would create additional costs for Havering which would lose some of the economies of scale that had been achieved by sharing services. Under the Partnership Agreement between the three boroughs, the two boroughs requesting the withdrawal of services had to compensate Havering for the additional costs this change created

In light of the decision made by the oneSource Joint Committee there was a need to review the finance service for Havering.

Other possibilities included sharing services with another provider and there was also the introduction of the new Fusion system which should provide efficiencies.

The annual compensation figure was in the region of £346,000 and would cover the loss of revenue from the shared agreement. This however was only payable for 30 months.

The Board **considered** the report and made the following recommendations.

- That Cabinet reports on these issues should be more detailed
- That the Board have sight of the papers that went to the Joint-Committee.
- That the Board be advised how the compensation figures were calculated.

5 **AUTHORISATION TO AWARD A CONTRACT FOR THE EXTENSION OF UPMINSTER CEMETERY PHASES 2&3**

Members carried out pre-decision scrutiny of a report which sought authorisation to award a contract up to the value of £5,050,000 contained within the overall budget of £5,500,000 that had previously been agreed by Cabinet as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Land of 5.5 hectares was identified adjacent to the existing cemetery, sufficient to provide burial space for approximately 30 years at that time. To date only phase 1 of this land had been developed. A report had previously been agreed by Cabinet which agreed to the further extension of Upminster Cemetery (Phases 2 & 3).

Officers confirmed there had been an increase in burials without the pandemic factored in and that Havering currently carried out approximately 300 burials a year.

Members asked if the access road could be extended at the entrance as at present it was a very tight entrance.

The Board **considered** the report and made the following recommendations to the Executive;

- That the section of the report re procurement and the Council's preferred way of doing this be strengthened.
- That the possibility of extending the entrance or access road be explored.

Chairman